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Chavez Accuses Netherlands of Plotting Aggression With the U.S.

BYLINE: By SIMON ROMERO

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President Hugo Chavez is zeroing in on a nation he claims is a new enemy of his government: the Netherlands. Mr. Chavez, left, speaking from Copenhagen on Thursday, accused the Netherlands of plotting "military aggression" against Venezuela with the United States from Aruba and **Curacao in the Dutch Antilles**, islands from which American military personnel operate antidrug flights in the Caribbean.

A spokesman from the Dutch Embassy in Caracas did not respond to a request for comment.

Associated Press Worldstream

December 17, 2009 Thursday 11:50 PM GMT

Venezuela's Chavez sees US threat in Dutch islands

SECTION: INTERNATIONAL NEWS

DATELINE: COPENHAGEN

Hugo Chavez accused the Netherlands on Thursday of allowing the United States to use Dutch islands off Venezuela's Caribbean coast to prepare a possible military attack against his country.

The Venezuelan leader said the U.S. military, to prepare for a possible offensive, has sent intelligence agents, war ships and spy planes to Aruba, Curacao and Bonaire, which are self-governing Dutch islands.

"They are three islands in Venezuela's territorial waters, but they are still under an imperial regime: the Netherlands," Chavez said during a speech at a climate change conference in Denmark. "Europe should know that the North American empire is filling these islands with weapons, assassins, American intelligence units, and spy planes and war ships."

In Washington, State Department spokesman Ian Kelly denied that U.S. military personnel in the Caribbean are planning to attack Venezuela.

"These allegations are baseless. These are routine exercises. We seek cooperation with the region," Kelly said.

Chavez did not offer evidence supporting his accusations, but he blamed the Netherlands and said the European Union should take a stance.

"I would like to know that the European Union has to say about this," Chavez said. "The Netherlands is responsible for this."

Chavez claims it's part of a broader plan by Washington to undermine leftist governments throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, including Ecuador, Nicaragua, Bolivia and Cuba.

"It's a threat to all the people of Latin America and the Caribbean," he said in a speech on the sidelines of the climate change conference in Denmark.

The socialist leader has repeatedly accused President Barack Obama's administration of conspiring with neighboring Colombia to topple his government.

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